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Agenda item 49

Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2010, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-fifth session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item and held a general debate on it at its 18th meeting, on 28 October 2010, and took action on the item at its 23rd meeting, on 11 November (see A/C.4/65/SR.18 and 23).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation.[1]

4. At the 18th meeting, on 28 October, the representative of Canada, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, made a statement on the work of that Committee (see A/C.4/65/SR.18).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/65/L.6

5. At the 23rd meeting, on 11 November, the representative of Canada, on behalf of Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Sweden,

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 46* and addendum (A/65/46 and Add.1).

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Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/65/L.6).

6. Subsequently, Greece, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Monaco, New Zealand and Ukraine joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

7. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

8. Also at its 23rd meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/65/L.6 without a vote (see para. 9).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on mankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Taking note with appreciation of the work of the Scientific Committee, and noting the letters from its Chair to the President of the General Assembly[1] as well as the report on its fifty-seventh session,[2]

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work, and welcoming the increased commitment of States members of the Scientific Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding, as well as efficient management, of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews from Member States of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Acknowledging that Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine had informed the President of the General Assembly before 28 February 2007, in accordance with paragraph 14 of Assembly resolution 61/109 of 14 December 2006, of their desire to become members of the Scientific Committee,

Welcoming the attendance of Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine as observers at the fifty-sixth and fifty-seventh sessions of the Scientific Committee,

Recalling the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the financial and administrative implications of increased membership of the Scientific Committee, staffing of its professional secretariat, and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding,[3]

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[1] A/64/223 and A/64/796.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/65/46 and Add.1).

[3] A/63/478.

Welcoming the establishment of a new P-4 post for the secretariat of the Scientific Committee, noting that staffing was one of the points that had to be addressed in anticipation of a possible increase in membership, and noting also that such resources were necessary to support the work of the Scientific Committee,

Noting that the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific Committee had to be unavoidably postponed, inter alia, as a result of the worldwide flight disruptions following volcanic eruptions in Iceland in April 2010, and recognizing the important work done by the secretariat to regain the lost time by preparing additional detailed documentation of a high scientific quality for the rescheduled fifty-seventh session,

Recalling its direction, most recently in paragraph 13 of its resolution 64/85 of 10 December 2009, that the Scientific Committee, together with the observer countries, continue its reflection on how its current, as well as potentially revised, membership could best support its work,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution it has been making since its inception to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation, and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgement;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session;

4. *Endorses* the intentions and plans of the Scientific Committee for conducting its present programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, encourages the Scientific Committee at its earliest convenience to submit the related reports, including on assessments of levels of ionizing radiation from electrical energy production, as well as on the effects on human health and the environment, which shall include the submission of the report requested by the Assembly on the attribution of health effects due to radiation exposure, and requests the Scientific Committee to submit plans for its ongoing programme of work to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session;

5. *Calls upon* the Secretariat to facilitate the timely publication of the reports of the Scientific Committee, inter alia, by streamlining internal procedures as necessary;

6. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report can reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

7. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the Secretariat to facilitate such consultations;

8. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the effects of ionizing radiation

in affected areas, and invites the Scientific Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

9. *Also welcomes* the Scientific Committee's new strategy to improve data collection, encourages in this regard Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly, and further encourages the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization and other relevant organizations to establish and coordinate with the secretariat the arrangements for periodic collection and exchange of data on radiation exposures of workers, the general public, and, in particular, medical patients;

10. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue providing support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and for the dissemination of its findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public;

11. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to strengthen the funding of the Scientific Committee, pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 63/89 of 5 December 2008 and paragraph 12 of Assembly resolution 64/85 of 10 December 2009, and encourages Member States to consider making voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the Scientific Committee;

12. *Expresses its satisfaction* at the prompt reaction of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee in overcoming the unexpected and unavoidable postponement of the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific Committee, inter alia, by preparing detailed documentation of a high scientific quality;

13. *Invites* Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine to continue the practice, started in 2007, by designating one scientist to attend, as an observer, the fifty-eighth session of the Scientific Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on the objective criteria and indicators to be equitably applied, taking into account all previous resolutions of the General Assembly on the Scientific Committee, to determine membership that would best support the essential work of the Scientific Committee, and also requests the Secretary-General to consider the financial implications of increased membership, taking into account documents A/64/6 (Sect. 14) and A/64/6/Add.1;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly, within existing resources, at its sixty-sixth session, regarding the effects of atomic radiation in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, taking into account analysis by recognized experts, including the Scientific Committee, and previously published studies on the topic.